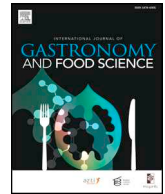




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## Review Article

## Gastronomic tourism in Greece and beyond: A thorough review

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## ABSTRACT

It may be the case that the world is gradually becoming global (and somehow unified), but tourists are more and more looking for experiences based on 'divergence', on destination identity and culture. One such strong 'diversity' feature is the regional gastronomy. According to Y. Perdomo of UNWTO, each dish conveys a story and each ingredient relates to the story of a touristic destination. In this extensive review of the relevant bibliography and online sources an attempt is made to capture the current situation in the gastronomic tourism globally and specifically in Greece. The review includes introductory material and historical information, reference to the international and regional studies on gastronomic tourism and tourism resources, and an overview of the specificity of the situation in Greece. The study closes by providing a list of promising trends for the future.

## Introduction

Tourism is a phenomenon that dates back to ancient times. Ancient Greek philosophers recognized, adopted, and promoted the concept of rest based on tourism. During the Dark Ages (since 500 AD) tourism took the form of festivals and event participation. An aristocratic form of tourism appeared in the 16th century. The privileged classes were transferred to important destinations for the pursuit of both culture and education. Until the 18th century, emerging middle classes formed an ever-evolving element of tourism. In the early 1970s, tourism used the natural and cultural resources of a destination as a tourist attraction. It was therefore regarded as a 'smoke free industry' (Saveriades, 2000).

Clarke et al., 2001 note that tourism has increased rapidly in recent years in many areas around the world (Christou, 2010). In practice tourism is an amalgam of tangible and intangible entities involved in various forms of experience. Today, the scientific community as well as tourism professionals recognize many different aspects or types of tourism, such as the gastronomic tourism, and embrace and try to provide means to support the rapid development of tourism worldwide. This development is obviously related to the economic benefits and local and regional development, although significant negative social and environmental effects associated with uneven development have

also been reported. Sustainable development policies have already been implemented to minimize those negative effects. In this context, gastronomic tourism is a form of alternative sustainable tourism, which may also contribute to a solution for the problem of seasonality.

Food is an essential commodity as well as being social and cultural heritage. According to Morgan (2010) food is as vital to human health and well-being as any other product and this is the main reason so much importance is attached to it. It has been suggested that food plays a multifunctional connective role in society and that sustainable food systems support sustainable communities. Food influences lifestyles, health and habits as well as the design model for land, water, energy, transport and ecosystem services. Cooking and gastronomy are gradually becoming more and more important in modern societies. In 2014, the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education adopted a movement for a European Parliament resolution on "European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects".<sup>1</sup> It recognizes the importance of nutrition and gastronomy as an artistic and cultural expression and proclaims them fundamental pillars of family and social relationships.<sup>2</sup> The S3 Platform<sup>3</sup> organized a thematic workshop on "Smart specialisation and food: food, gastronomy and bio-economy as elements of regional innovation strategies". The workshop focused on nutrition, gastronomy and bio-economics as areas of smart

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<sup>1</sup> European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2014-0211&language=EN&ring=A7-2014-0127>.

<sup>2</sup> European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2014-0211&language=EN&ring=A7-2014-0127>.

<sup>3</sup> The S3 Platform aids EU countries and regions to develop and implement research and development strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3), <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3-platform>.

specialisation in EU countries and regions and international experts identified them as genuine elements of smart specialisation. Participants dealt with innovation issues in food as a driving force for smart regional development, with the role of public and private actors in supporting priorities in the agri-food sector as well as differences in the culture and approaches of gastronomy (Cavicchi and Stancova, 2016).

According to Mitchel Hall et al. (2003) gastronomic tourism is the visit to primary and secondary food and drink producers, gastronomy festivals, dining venues and specific locations, where tasting and experience of special local food features are a prime motivation for the visit. Although this definition emphasises that gastronomy is a prime motivation for tourists, there is a wide range of tourists' preferences regarding the level of interest and importance of gastronomy in a journey, from visits to restaurants only for the basic nutrition, to planning the whole trip according to gastronomy-related activities.

Today's interest in local food is explained by issues related to the environment, ethics, sustainability and local health issues, as well as consumers' desire to support local networks and economies, and to reduce their carbon footprint (Pesonen et al., 2011). In addition, consumers perceive those products to be more 'fresh', 'tasty' and 'reliable' (Roininen et al., 2006). Studies also show that local food is considered 'authentic', 'clean' and 'traditional'. However, local food is also considered both 'simple' and 'distinct' (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2013; Sims, 2009).

Furthermore, every local food market is unique. Food markets in Paris differ from those in New York or Helsinki and are all major attractions for tourists (Richards, 2003). Differences depend on local culture and history, socioeconomic and environmental conditions, food varieties and dietary preferences. Therefore, because of these local specialties, local food has become a means of tourist attraction (S. Smith and Costello, 2009; Tikkanen, 2007). The importance of the search for particular flavours, tastes and eating experiences is constantly increasing (Gyimóthy and Mykletun, 2009). In addition to valuing local food as authentic and traditional, it is an attraction for travellers because of the new experience they promise to offer (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2013; Sims, 2009). Indeed, local food can act as a 'trigger' for the destination, which means that travellers can choose a particular destination because of the local food and their expected gastronomic experiences.

An interesting recent research that examined the association of gastronomy with the brand-name and the identity of a region, investigated the aspects of the influence of food identity categories adopted by branding campaigns and programs. This influence is graphically shown in Fig. 1, as adapted from (Somas et al., 2016). An important finding of this research, as illustrated in this diagram, is that the largest proportion (33.96%) of the content analysis of the promotional material appears to relate the branding with the popularity of food-related places (like restaurants) and, indeed, with a large percentage difference from other factors. It is noted that the content analysis conducted was intended to identify the existence and frequency of keywords, phrases and content associated with any aspect of a site's culinary identity. The case study was the city of Copenhagen and the content analysed was taken from the site <https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/>. The researchers found that there are many reasons why food or food-related experiences are and should be a desirable tool to use in the branding of a destination. Food is an important tool for storytelling, as through food one can tell stories about the values and culture of the destination, especially in destinations that do not have significant historical monuments and sights. The study also found that the promotion strategy may be based on factors that are otherwise insufficient to capture the full culinary identity of the destination. The Copenhagen case study found that dining places bear the brunt of the promotion, while other public opinion polls also highlighted more important factors, such as the origin of food, or the way food reflects local culture (Somas et al., 2016).

The kitchen, the place in which many different identities of a society

come together, is a mirror of everyday life, religious beliefs, habits, traditions and customs (Sormaz et al., 2016). Many types of food and gastronomy habits relate closely to regions and countries. Italy is easily associated with pizza and pasta, or England with fish and potatoes, Greece with souvlaki and moussaka, Sweden's western coast with shellfish and Voss in Norway with smalahove (Gyimóthy and Mykletun, 2009). Local food is dynamic, in a process of constant change, as it also has an international dimension, and is a matter of debate and exchange of views from around the world. For example, moussaka is not only a local dish in Greece, but can be found in various variations in the Balkan countries and the Middle East. In addition, food entices all senses and not just the taste, including vision, odour, hearing and touch. A local food market, for example, offers multiple experiences for the eyes, nose and ears. In addition, food and gastronomy meet other needs and desires, such as socialization and learning (Hegarty and O'Mahony, 2001; Tikkanen, 2007). Food-related experiences are particularly characteristic and may be personal or even related to a situation. The fact that the experiences are personal means that the overall perception of a culinary-gastronomic experience varies (Schembri, 2006; Sfandla and Björk, 2013). It is noteworthy that the level of subjectivity in the gastronomic experience may lead some travellers to consider rather trivial ('regular') a moussaka in a local restaurant, or a 'poikilia' ('variety') in a traditional cafe in Greece, while others consider it to be a great experience. On the other hand, even a 'regular' dish can provide an excellent gastronomic experience because it may be of excellent quality (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014).

#### Definitions and misconceptions

The word 'gastronomy' was formed by the merger of the ancient Greek word 'γαστήρ' for stomach and the ending '-onomy', which as a second synthetic of abstract feminine nouns that denote science, a scientific field or knowledge. It also appears as a combination of the words 'gastric' and 'νέμω' ('nehmo'), in which the latter implies division, arrangement.

In many resources, gastronomy is defined as the art of eating and drinking. In fact it is an interdisciplinary branch of art and science that is directly related to chemistry, literature, biology, geology, history, music, philosophy, psychology, sociology, medicine, nutrition and agriculture (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). As far as food and drink are concerned, it covers, inter alia, topics in the sciences of nutrition, the sense of taste and physiology, the production of wine, nutritional functions in the human body, food selection properties, development of production processes according to hygiene standards, and more (Shenoy, 2005).

The purpose of gastronomy is to preserve human health with the best possible nutrition and to ensure the enjoyment of life and food. Foods and drinks that are produced in a healthy environment and are ready to be offered in a special way that satisfies other senses (such as vision and touch) are also among the topics closely related with gastronomy (Sormaz et al., 2016). The multidimensional nature of gastronomy and its relationships with other sciences was analysed and graphically depicted in (Zahari et al., 2009).

Although various terms are being used in the literature, such as 'culinary tourism', 'gastronomic tourism', 'gastro-tourism', 'wine tourism', 'food tourism' and 'gourmet tourism', the widely used term 'gastronomic tourism' is typically defined as the pursuit of a *unique experience of eating and drinking*. Gastronomic tourism, which generally refers to the originality of a dish and is indigenous to a place, region or country, covers the basic themes of local dishes and wines (Green and Dougherty, 2008; Groves, 2001; Hall and Mitchell, 2007).

There are many approaches to the definition of gastronomic tourism throughout the world. According to the Travel Industry Dictionary, 'gastro-tourism' is any leisure trip made exclusively or mainly for the experience of a region's food and wine (Travel Industry Dictionary, 2014). In addition to differentiating the use of the term 'gastro-tourism'

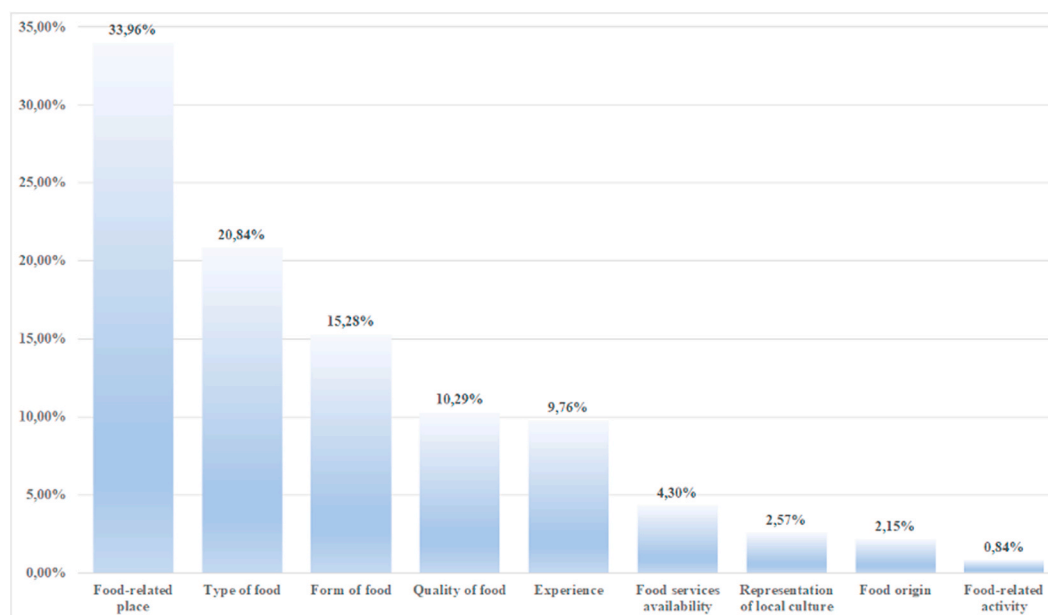


Fig. 1. Contribution of the food identity categories in region branding.

from ‘gastronomy tourism’, this dictionary also goes on to introduce the term ‘gastronaut’ for the person that engages in such an activity.

Sharples and Hall (2004) define gastronomic tourism as a travel experience in an area with distinct gastronomy, with recreational purposes that include visits to primary or secondary food producers, gastronomic events, rural markets, culinary events and quality tastings, and generally any kind of food-related activity. In this case, gastronomy is the main motive for choosing a tourist destination or at least one of the most important.

Smith and Xiao (2008) define gastronomic tourism as any travel experience through which the traveller learns, appreciates and enjoys well-known local gastronomy products. According to the authors, the term ‘gastronomic tourism’ refers to both the travel, the main motives of which is gastronomy, and to the journeys in which tourists strive to experience different and excellent eating experiences, even if this is not the primary purpose of the journey.

Other researchers (Long, 2004) argue that gastronomic tourism refers to travellers seeking to explore new flavours, using food as a means of getting to know different cultures and lifestyles.

Many researchers and writers view gastronomy as closely linked to cultural tourism, viewing food as a manifestation of the culture of a destination (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000; Van Westering, 1999).

Gastronomic tourism includes visits to food producers, participation in gastronomy festivals, visits to restaurants and special places related to special local food, tasting special dishes, observing production and preparation processes, tasting special dishes by famous chefs, as well as exploring how a particular dish is prepared (Hall and Mitchell, 2007; Mitchel Hall et al., 2003). In addition, the realm of gastronomic tourism also includes tourist trips in seek of personal experience in local food and drink, in addition to the classic visit to restaurants and hotels. The gastronomy tourism industry, which is not only comprised of food guides and restaurants, covers all types of culinary experiences, including cooking schools or seminars, cookbooks, culinary travel agencies and guides, related TV programs, magazines and activities, wineries, vineyards, breweries, distilleries and agricultural producers.

One of the world-wide bodies of tourism that one can look for in retrieving the definitions involved in gastronomy and gastronomic tourism is none other than the Word Food Travel Association (WFTA). Terminology and basic statistics can be found on its website. The WFTA has identified at least 12 categories of gastronomic tourism experience.

- Cooking schools and seminars
- Gastronomic sights
- Gastronomic destinations
- Gastronomic events
- Means of gastronomy
- Accommodation related to gastronomy
- Gastronomic markets
- Gastronomic tours, guides, tour packages and agents
- Dining areas
- Cottages, farms and related agri-food markets
- Gastronomy clubs and associations
- Gastronomy processing

As the WFTA states about the adoption of terms relating to the food tourism industry, there is a constant shift in the trend. The following paragraphs briefly review the history of gastronomic tourism terms according to the WFTA.

#### The period 2001–2012

In the early days of the food tourism industry (2001–2012), the WFTA defined ‘culinary tourism’ as the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and unforgettable food and drink experiences, both far and near (Wolf, 2002). In essence, this publication was the first white paper on the culinary tourism industry for the WFTA, which defined culinary tourism and how it could benefit industry stakeholders. For the WFTA, the distance travelled by the tourist is not as important as the fact that everyone, regardless of age, is constantly on the move. All are ‘travellers’ in some way and obviously everyone needs food. As a result, everyone can be regarded as a ‘food traveller’. On the other hand, for many organizations and tourism agencies, the definition of tourism must include traveling some distance (often 80 km /50 miles) or at least spend one night to a lodging.

#### The period 2012–2018

The WFTA stopped using the term ‘culinary tourism’ to describe the food tourism industry in 2012 because its research revealed an underlying misleading impression. While the term ‘cooking’ can technically be used for anything related to food and drink, the prevailing perception gave it an air of elitism. So, the WFTA coined the term ‘food tourism’, which is still the general term we use today.

### Current period (2018-)

Since 2018, the official position of the WFTA is that the three most used terms, 'food tourism', 'culinary tourism' and 'gastronomy tourism', are functionally equivalent. WFTA recognizes 20 involved industry domains in gastronomy tourism including production, cooking and cooking schools, farms and agri-food, events and symposia, dining places, markets, distribution and chains, travel agencies and transportation, entrepreneurship, trade associations, technological platforms, academia, governance and more (World Food Travel Association, 2018). In this description, the main axes are the production, the hospitality and the services.

According to the WFTA, a common misconception or misunderstanding among industry professionals is that rural/agritourism and gastronomic or food/culinary tourism are interchangeable terms. Agritourism includes experiences in farms such as overnight stays, harvest festivals and dining in the farm, with some types of agritourism popular with internal tourists and others more attractive to visitors from other countries. Recently, there has been a growing interest among tourists in food pedigree and traceability, composting, sustainability and animal welfare, as, although these parameters are more related to the food industry and less relevant to the tourism, tourists carry with them their behaviours and values and want to see those values reflected in the place they visit. The economic impact of gastronomic tourism as a whole can be far greater than that of agritourism, as it includes a wider variety of complementary businesses that attract more travellers than farms and rural markets.

### Studies on gastronomic tourism

#### Scientific studies

Scientific research on local food as a feature of a tourist destination has revolved around various management issues and consumer understanding. These studies included local foods in restaurant menus (Yurtseven and Kaya, 2011), local foods as a means of destination differentiation (Boyne et al., 2003), branding and marketing (Forristal and Lehto, 2009; Lin et al., 2011; Meler and Cerovic, 2003; F. Okumus et al., 2013; Pestek and Nikolic, 2011), tourism food product development (Meler and Cerovic, 2003) and related challenges (Cohen and Avieli, 2004). Consumer studies on the topic have documented that the consumption of food by tourists in a destination serves many purposes (Tikkanen, 2007), is multidimensional and dynamic (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016a) and, above all, contributes to the travel experience (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2013). However Kim et al. (2009) argue that local food requires more scientific attention, as many questions about the consumption of local food by tourists remain unanswered. It has also been reported that eating-related experiences have behavioural implications, as living experiences can create important memories. However, even without particular experiences from the past, local foods and eating habits can influence destination choices (Henderson, 2009). Therefore, it has been found that local food markets can form expectations of destinations (Pestek and Nikolic, 2011), which means that local foods may influence *pre-trip* behaviours, (Duarte Alonso, 2010; Quan and Wang, 2004; S. Smith and Costello, 2009). In addition, food influences behaviour *in the destination area*, as eating is an important part of the tourist's travel expenses and are part of their daily routine. Local gastronomic experiences can also influence *post-trip* behaviour, as travellers have been shown to share their experiences, either positive or negative (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2012).

Research has found that a destination's food and eating habits can attract tourists looking for experiences, as well as those seeking authenticity and local specialty (Pesonen et al., 2011). Thus, travellers can be attracted to a destination because of the gastronomic experiences gained, e.g. through Michelin-starred high-end restaurants. Travellers can also be fascinated by local and national specialties and dishes. However, gastronomic experiences may also include aspects related to

more trivial eating practices, such as those offered by cafes and other types of graphic or charming cafes and restaurants.

Obviously, food tourism refers to the journey for the personal experience of tasting local and authentic food, attending events, festivals and food festivals, and tasting local and international cuisine (Sharples and Hall, 2004). However, it also refers to culinary, gastronomic and gourmet tourism (Okumus et al., 2007). Food tourists are classified into different groups according to the importance of food in their journey, from those who do not care about local food to those who travel exclusively to try local and unique cuisines (Andersson and Mossberg, 2017; Boyne et al., 2002; McKercher et al., 2008). Studies have found that the majority of travellers recognize local cuisine as a major factor influencing destination choice, travel experience and decision to re-visit the same destination (Karim and Chi, 2010; Silkes et al., 2013).

Culinary products, services and food culture in one destination can be considered as unique strategic resources, without the possibility of being imitated by other destinations (Hornig and Tsai, 2010; Okumus et al., 2007). First of all, food, as a defining social indicator, represents the region and its citizens (Andersson, 2014; Gillespie and Cousins, 2012). In addition, tourists can look for indigenous, national or local food. Although some travellers avoid looking for local foods (e.g. food neophobia), they may still be curious about local food and nutrition experiences (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016b). Tangible features of local and international foods, such as their taste and ingredients, can contribute to the cognitive and emotional elements (e.g. feelings and experiences) of the destination image (Silkes et al., 2013).

There are different levels of interest in local and authentic cuisines. For tourists, local food has social, psychological, cultural, and experiential meanings (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Caplan, 1997). According to (Frochot, 2003), by eating local food, tourists can satisfy their needs related to relaxation, excitement, escape, social status, education and lifestyle. While the reasons for eating local and international food may vary (e.g. satisfying hunger, tasting local culture, social interaction), the availability of local and international food can affect the visitor's travel experiences and their intention to return (Henderson, 2009). The experience of local food can be a cultural experience and a form of entertainment (Fields, 2003; Quan and Wang, 2004; Ryu and Jang, 2006; Sparks et al., 2003). Place-specific food and nutrition can attract more tourists when integrated into a strategic promotion plan that includes periodic events, festivals or social media platforms (Viljoen et al., 2017). While some food lovers may not believe that they have the qualities of a taster, they may find local food an important factor in their decision to visit and re-visit the destination. Therefore, the sector of gastronomic tourism should aim at a much broader target than a limited elite (Boniface, 2017; McKercher et al., 2008).

Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) conducted a research aimed at quantifying the factors that contribute to travellers' gastronomic experiences with emphasis on the local food market. This study found that local food is an important tourist attraction and is central to the tourist experience. The study supported previous findings that gastronomy, as experienced in tourist destinations, contributes to tourist satisfaction and influences behaviour. The study has shown that, although most travellers may have a casual attitude towards food, they greatly appreciate the aspects the destination has to offer. Therefore, evidence has shown that travellers enjoy the consumption of local culture, of which local foods, on-site food consumption and local eating habits are essential ingredients. Specifically, the study indicates that food experiences on the destination are considered almost as important as the other motivations analysed in the study, namely 'relaxation', 'socialization', 'new experiences' and 'culture'. The study though identified differences among the ages, with an apparent shift in preference from 'new experiences' for younger ages to 'relaxation' for adults and 'culture' for older people. The study identified the main contributing factors to the gastronomic experience and classified them into three main categories, namely:



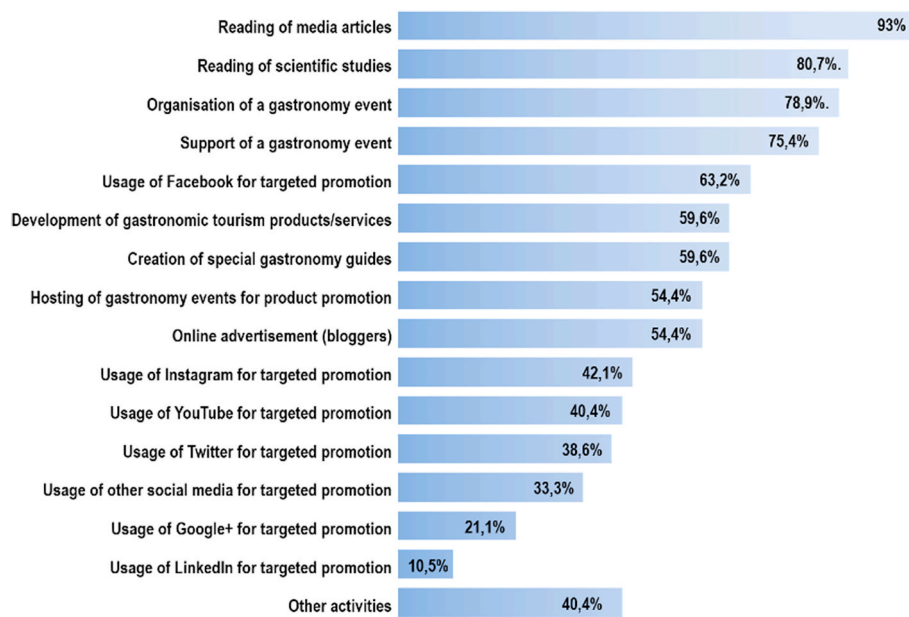


Fig. 2. Types of activity used in the promotion of gastronomic tourism during 2016.

- **Foods:** 'local food', 'local food culture', 'new food experiences', 'original food', 'food authenticity', 'home-made food'.
- **Environment:** 'restaurant environment', 'restaurant atmosphere', 'restaurant dining', 'aesthetics' and 'slow food'.
- **Behaviour:** 'familiar food', 'food preparation' and 'different eating style'.

The study showed that among the factors contributing to the gastronomic experience, 'slow food', 'restaurant atmosphere /environment' and 'original food' are the most important.

#### Studies of the World Food Travel Association

WFTA has done extensive research in an attempt to trace the profile of a gastronomy tourist and presents important statistics in its 2016 food travel monitor research report. According to the findings of this research, by the research participants (World Food Travel Association, 2018), over 60% stated they photograph food or gastronomy products and share their experiences on social networks (61%) on at least half of their trips; a 47% made purchases of gastronomy products in local markets and a 45% participated in at least 5 different types of cooking or gastronomy activities. A large proportion, 81%, learned about local foods and drinks and at the same percentage they believe that through gastronomy they better understand local culture. 82% spent more on their diet while on a trip than in any ordinary day, with this rate going up further for gastronomy tourists. Even better, 83% believe that gastronomy experiences help create more indelible impressions and memories of the destination they visited. Tourists spend about 25% of their travel budget on food and beverages; this percentage can reach 35% on more expensive destinations, or can be reduced to 15% on more budget destinations.

In this report WFTA goes on to state that 93% of tourists can be considered 'gastronomic tourists', when this term covers those involved in any form of gastronomic experience apart from the simple daily dining, during the last 12-month period covered in the report. Tourists may, for example, have visited a culinary school, participated in a gastronomy tour, or made purchases at a local grocery or gastronomy store. Also, guided tours in food or beverage factories, participating in wine/beer/spirits tasting, dining in unique or important restaurants, visits to chocolates, bakeries or pastry shops that may be reference points for a destination. These are indicative types of activities in which

gastronomy tourists are involved.

#### Studies of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Between June and September 2016 and announced in 2017, UNWTO conducted a survey among its members from 29 countries, including tourism professionals (United National World Tourism Organization, 2017). The most important findings of the research are related to the perception of the importance of gastronomic tourism. Specifically, the majority (with a very large 87%) of the stakeholders expressed that gastronomy is a distinctive and strategic element in defining the image and trademark of a destination. The remaining 13% of respondents answered alternatively that visiting friends and relatives is the main motivation. Regarding the issue of gastronomy as a driving force for tourism development, the average response was 8.19 on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 representing 'complete agreement'). In general, the primary motivation for visiting a destination is cultural, with nature as the second and gastronomy as third, albeit somewhat distant from the first two. In this research, the motivations that also emerged include market, wellness, sports, religion and health, in order of importance. In relation to promotion strategies, research has shown that among the participants about 70% have already targeted gastronomic tourists as part of the market, however, only 10% believe that gastronomic tourism has enough involvement in promoting a destination. Another 65.5% believe that gastronomic tourism is promoted, albeit inadequately. A 46.5% have a gastronomic tourism strategy in their respective destination general action plan. What is even more important is that all respondents have undertaken activities to promote gastronomic tourism, and none of them believe that targeting this section of tourists had any negative impact in any way, whereas 24.6% allocated a budget specifically to attract gastronomic tourists. Also interesting is that the percentage devoted specifically to gastronomic activities within the organisation's annual budget is very heterogeneous: 31.2% indicates that it ranges 1% - 9%, while 6.3% indicates a 100%, resulting in an average of 20.2%. Last but not least, 12.5% believe gastronomy contributes less than US \$10,000, while 3.1% believe gastronomy contributes more than US \$1 million.

Fig. 2 (adapted from (United National World Tourism Organization, 2017)) shows the breakdown of activities undertaken to promote gastronomic tourism as captured during the survey. With regard to measuring the tourism experience, the study has shown that promoting

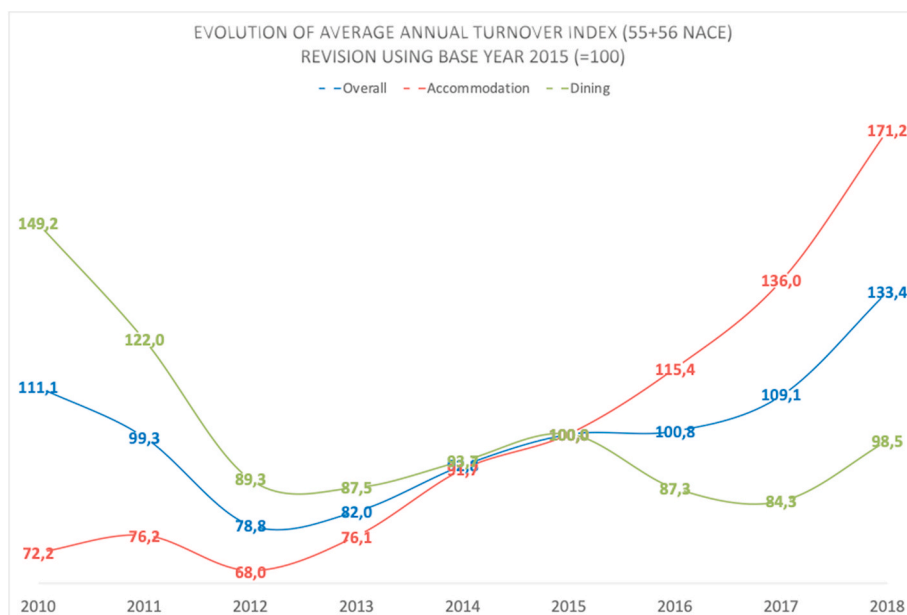


Fig. 3. Evolution of the annual average turnover in accommodation and dining between 2010–2018 according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority.

gastronomic tourism before and during the tourist experience is considered essential for the development of this type of tourism. However, it has been observed that different organizations value experiences with different approaches. It is certain that an objective measurement of the impact of the tourism experience is needed to improve, develop, understand and address the challenges, as well as seize the opportunities. In this study, 68.5% of the participants evaluate and measure the tourist experience, while 30% do not. The most commonly used measuring tools are surveys (79.5%), direct feedback from tourists (77%) and monitoring of indirect feedback and evaluation (from social networks) (61.5%). The participants consider a variety of evaluation indicators, including the number of visitors (84%), expenditure (daily expenditure on food/beverages) (68.5%), development/initiatives (63%), private investment (44%), the number of gastronomy related events (42%) and other indicators (12.5%). Last but not least, 44% of the participants develop public-private partnerships.

### The specificity of Greek gastronomic tourism

Fig. 3 presents the evolution of the average turnover index in the accommodation and dining services sector as an indicative overview of the sectors over the period 2010–2018, including the revised data with a base year in 2015 (period: 1st Quarter 2010 - 3rd Quarter 2018), as displayed on December 25, 2018.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of these data is provided by the Hellenic Statistical Authority. At the same time, useful conclusions can be drawn from the Survey of Quality Characteristics of Domestic Tourists (Vacation Survey) of the Hellenic Statistical Authority. The following subsections review the cases of two regions in North Greece where gastronomy and culinary culture is exceptional.

#### Case study #1: Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Greece

According to the Enterprise Greece study (Enterprise Greece, 2017), among the reasons for investing in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (EMT) are (a) *natural and cultural treasures*: unique natural beauty combined with long history, religious treasures and friendly people; (b) *tourist destination*: a popular destination offering an

upgraded and diversified tourism product including hiking, sightseeing, local gastronomy, water sports etc. EMT offers almost all types of tourism activities including.

- *cultural tourism* (Drama Archaeological Museum, Philippi Archaeological Museum, Kavala Archaeological Museum, Port of Thassos Archaeological Museum);
- *religious tourism* (the Eikosifoinissa Monastery on Mount Pangaeo, the monastery of Agios Silas, the Baptistery of Hagia Lydia, the Monastery of Taxiarches, the Monastery of Panagia Kalamos);
- *conference and exhibition tourism* (Conference Centre in Lydia, Nea Karvali Exhibition Centre, Komotini Exhibition Centre, Thracian Art and Tradition Foundation, hotels in each city provide facilities for various events);
- *ecotourism* (Elati forest, Fraktou forest, Rhodope mountain range, Nestos Delta, Evros Delta, Pomakohoria, beautiful beaches on the coast, impressive mountains and forests);
- *therapeutic tourism* (baths in Krinides, spa in Thermi and Potamia in Xanthi, Samothrace and Traianoupolis);
- *agritourism* (many agritourism farms and hostels have recently developed in all the prefectures of the area).

According to the study, the key products and some unique features in EMT are as follows. For the *Prefecture of Drama*, the prefecture's economy is mainly based on agriculture, while the plains of the southern part of the prefecture produce seeds, cotton, tomatoes, tobacco, vineyards, fruits and vegetables. Agriculture makes the most of water resources. Regarding the *Prefecture of Evros*, the economy of Evros is mainly based on the cultivation of cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables, as well as the systematic cultivation of certain plants used in industry such as sunflower and sesame. Sugarcane production supplies the sugar factory in north Evros, and the asparagus plant is systematically cultivated. Also, molasses, almond trees, apples and pears are grown, while olive trees grow in Samothrace. In the *Kavala Prefecture*, fish are exported and marketed throughout Greece and abroad. Agriculture also produces tobacco, but also seeds, rice, legumes, kiwi, cotton, grapes and vegetables. There are also olive groves, which produce large quantities of olive oil, vineyards and cultivation of asparagus and rice. In the *Xanthi Prefecture*, the region produces the famous aromatic tobacco, cotton, wheat, corn, kiwi and vegetables. Fish are abundant in Vistonida Bay and there are fish farms in Porto Lagos Lake.

<sup>4</sup> As shown on the page of the Hellenic Statistical Authority, <https://www.statistics.gr/statistics/-/publication/DKT51/>.

Xanthi is famous for local sweets, such as coriander, sutzuk lukum, halva, syrups, etc. Last but not least, in the *Rhodope Prefecture*, in which agriculture dominates, cotton, tobacco, wheat, corn, sugarcane, sunflower oil, cherry, kiwi and vegetables are the main agricultural products.

Regarding the recent developments and new opportunities in EMT, the Rural Development Program 2014–2020 for the Region focuses mainly on enhancing farmers' viability and competitiveness, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, and enhancing local development in rural areas. It emphasises investments in wheat, tobacco, cotton, asparagus, potatoes, wine, rice and kiwi, while promoting further investment in livestock and aquaculture, and calls for investments for the growing demand for eco-friendly agricultural products.

#### Case study #2: Central Macedonia, Greece

According to the Enterprise Greece study (Enterprise Greece, 2018), among the reasons for investing in the Region of Central Macedonia are (a) *natural and cultural treasures*: unique natural beauty combined with long history, religious treasures and friendly people; (b) *tourist destination*: a popular destination offering upgraded and diversified tourism product including hiking, sightseeing, local gastronomy, water sports etc.

According to the study, key products and some unique features in the region have been identified as explained in the following text. The products of Central Macedonia are highly valued, both in the Greek and worldwide markets. The dedication and capacity of the producers, together with the concerted efforts of local and national organizations managing and promoting agricultural products, have helped to make the public aware of these unique, primitive, local products. *Honey*, on one side, with 6,500 honey workers (32% of the country total) and 1,910 tonnes of premium quality honey annually, characterizes Central Macedonia as a serious honey production centre in Greece. Regarding *virgin olive oil and olives*, the region produces oil and olives that are distinguished for their taste and quality, with high nutritional value. As regards the *goat cheese - feta cheese production*, goat cheese happens to be the traditional cheese of the region, which is made from non-blended goat milk and has an increased protein content. The Region is famous for its production of *ouzo and tsipouro* (a strong alcoholic beverage distillate containing 40–45% by volume alcohol produced from either the pomace or the wine after the grapes and juice have been separated). Last but not least, in a 10-acre marine area with a capacity of 3,470 tonnes per year, *Mediterranean fish* are raised in floating farms, 95% of which are exportable.

Regarding the recent developments and new opportunities in EMT, the Rural Development Program 2014–2020 for the Region focuses mainly on strengthening farm viability and competitiveness, preserving and enhancing ecosystems and fostering the local development in rural areas. It emphasises investments in wine, olives, olive oil cheese, and honey, while promoting further investment in aquaculture, and calls for investments for the growing demand for eco-friendly agricultural products.

#### The online promotion of the Greek gastronomic tourism

At the end of this review an attempt is made to give a brief overview of the presentation and promotion of Greek gastronomy and Greek gastronomic tourism on the World Wide Web. Initially the official promotion strategy is presented through the practices of the Greek National Tourism Organisation, and of relevant tourism websites, followed by references to articles published on sites and portals related to Greek gastronomy, in English. Officially, the current promotion strategy of the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) for the two-year current period of 2019–2020 (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2019; Ministry of Tourism, 2019), as prepared and approved by the Ministry of Tourism, includes among the tourism products that need to be emphasized the gastronomic tourism. In this strategy, the vision of

tourism in Greece focuses on the concepts of 'classic', 'historical', 'anthropocentric', 'authentic', 'traditional and at the same time modern', as a destination for all seasons, offering unique experiences.

The GNTO website<sup>5</sup> is the official website for the promotion of Greek tourism, with a lot of information on tourist destinations in Greece. This guide includes 'gastronomy' as one of the topics of central interest in the 'See and go' category. It also offers a special interactive online brochure dedicated to Greek gastronomy, with brief references to the main and most recognized products such as feta, olive oil, ouzo, wine, fresh fish and meat, Chios mastic and honey, as well as special recipes and dishes, such as Cretan delicacies, egg rolls, saganaki and halva (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2018). In terms of places of interest, the site offers specific guides, like, for example, for the case of Thrace (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2016), but has no specific reference to gastronomy in the area. In the special topic 'Gastronomy' the site presents the philosophy and 'atmosphere' of Greek gastronomy, as well as its essential ingredients. It also provides links for further information on the gastronomy of specific selected destinations. A search in the site using the term 'gastronomy' reports 465 articles. The site ranks gastronomy as a 'see and go' topic and presents a total of relevant information through 6 axes, which are non-other than, recipes, regional cuisine, traditional products, fruits, wines and beer. Particularly, in *recipes* (<http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/recipes>), general reference is made to the use of local traditional products in various regions of Greece and links to selected recipes. The *regional cuisine* section provides a brief overview of Greek traditional cuisine and presents selected destinations ([http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/regional\\_cuisine](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/regional_cuisine)). The *traditional products* axis ([http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/traditional\\_products](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/traditional_products)), provides a brief overview of the main traditional products of Greek gastronomy, such as olive oil, cheese and wine, are presented, with links to traditional products in selected areas. The *fruits* section (<http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/fruits>), makes special reference mainly to the fruits of the Summer-Autumn season, as well as to selected fruits of particular interest, such as chestnuts and pomegranates. *Greek wines* are also features in another separate axis ([http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/greek\\_wines](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/gastronomy/greek_wines)), which gives a brief description of Greek wines and their use at the Greek table. In the *Zythos - The Greek Beer* section (<http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/greekbeer>), a brief reference is made to the history of the Greek brewing (with reference to Homer's 'wine made of barley') and the use of beer in modern Greek gastronomy.

It is worth emphasizing that the importance which the Greek state now attaches to gastronomic tourism is also illustrated by the fact that the South Aegean Region has been proclaimed as the European Region of Gastronomy in 2019'.<sup>6</sup>

The Greek Gastronomy Guide (Pittas and Tsoukala, 2018) is a fairly extensive and up-to-date guide to Greek gastronomy with a view to linking it with tradition, events, markets, flavours and recipes. The guide structure consists of 4 sections and 12 main axes as follows:

General	Products/Producers	Dining places	Culture/Festivals
Places – History	Products	Tavernas	Festivals
Traditional cuisine	Producers	Restaurants	Markets
Accommodation	Dishes	Traditional Cafes	Sights

<sup>5</sup> Visit Greece, <http://www.visitgreece.gr>.

<sup>6</sup> Press release on the website of the Ministry of Tourism @ <http://www.mintour.gov.gr/PressRoom/PressReleases/h-y-poyrgos-toyris-moy-ka-elena-koyntoyra-ekpros-wphse-thn-kybernhsh-sthn-teleth-aponomhs-toy-titloy-european-region-of-gastronomy-2019-sthn-perifereia-n-aigaiou>, official site of the European Gastronomy Regions Proclamation @ <https://www.europeanregionofgastronomy.org/platform/south-aegean-2019/> and the corresponding page of the South Aegean Region - European Region of Gastronomy @ <http://www.aegeangastronomy.gr>.



This website offers access to rich content either horizontally or vertically, or through a selection of three key information points that guide through ‘what to eat’, ‘where to eat’ and ‘where to go’, or by choosing a site of visit respectively. The information provided (for the horizontal access mode) is configured in the following structure:

What to eat	Where to eat	Where to go
National products	Tavernas	Accommodation
Regional products	Restaurants	Festivals
Producers	Traditional cafes	Markets
Dishes		Sights
		‘Serviroume Aigaio’ by Blue Star*

\* This Greek transliterated phrase (literary meaning ‘we serve the Aegean’) is used by the Blue Star Ferries company to promote the Greek gastronomy aboard their ferries across the Aegean Sea.

The website includes a list of 50 places in both mainland and island Greece (as of March 2020). It is worth noting that at the time of writing this review, this guide presented the most complete, up-to-date and comprehensive structure and content on Greek gastronomy from all the sites reviewed. The site is available in two languages, English and Greek and includes a blog where relevant articles and news are posted.

**Wikipedia** has a corresponding article on Greek Cuisine in both Greek ([Wikipedia, 2018b](#)) and its English version ([Wikipedia, 2018a](#)). The content is different and so are the articles about local Greek cuisine, such as the (Greek) Macedonian Cuisine in English ([Wikipedia, 2018c](#)), or the Cretan Diet in Greek ([Wikipedia, 2017](#)). A similar differentiation exists for other topics related to Greek gastronomy.

An article titled “Starting with 100 Greek meze” is featured on **the Taste Greece Online** portal, featuring 100 typical Greek ‘meze’ categorized into categories such as salads, fries, sandwiches, etc ([Taste Greece Online, 2018](#)).

An article titled “An expert’s Greek food experience” is presented at the **Greece Is** portal, where the famous chef Diane Kochilas presents the Greek gastronomic tradition and some typical recipes from selected places ([Kochilas, 2017](#)).

The **Travel for Food Hub** portal features an article titled “8 food festivals you can’t miss in Greece” that aims to highlight 8 selected gastronomic festivals across Greece, such as the ‘Mushroom Festival’ in Grevena, or the ‘Sardine Party’ in Mytilene ([Travel for Food Hub, 2017](#)). The list is obviously indicative.

**Bucketlist Journey**’s portal features an article titled “29 traditional Greek foods you must eat in Greece” highlighting the value of the taste of Greek food and presenting 29 selected dishes that each visitor should try ([BucketListJourney, 2016](#)). The description is also supported by feature photos.

On the **Rough Guides** portal, Esme Fox signs an article titled “Greek food: 11 delicious dishes you need to try”, in which he goes on to introduce 11 selected Greek dishes. The presentation includes description and photographic material ([Fox, 2016](#)).

At the **Eater** portal, Kate Soto presents an article titled “A Big Fat Guide to Greek Wine: Everything You Need to Know”, where a reference is made to wine production by geographical region of Greece with its special features ([Soto, 2016](#)).

The **Telegraph** portal features an article titled “The 10 best food and wine holidays in Greece”, which selectively refers to gastronomy in regions of Greece, such as Santorini with its white eggplant and fava, or the culinary educational activities in Thessaly ([Telegraph, 2016](#)).

The **USA Greek Reporter** portal features an article titled “Learn and Travel Through Greece by Eating its Cuisine”, which highlights the relationship of nutrition to the geography, history and culture of an area and uses this approach to cite examples of recipes or ways of preparation across Greece ([USA.GreekReporter, 2014](#)).

The **Cooksinfo** portal features an interesting article titled “Food in ancient Greece”, which attempts to highlight the great history of

nutrition since ancient Greece. Through historical sources the article summarizes the role of basic foods such as bread, milk, fish and meat in the lives of ancient Greeks ([Amos, 2010](#)).

The **Travel Weekly** portal features an article titled “Greece: A regional guide to Greek cuisine”, with a brief description of the Greek menu and the main products of the Greek diet, as well as the most popular dishes by geographical region of the country ([Kelso, 2008](#)).

## Trends for the future of gastronomic tourism

### Psycho-culinary profiling

A tool called PsychoCulinary Profiling – a proprietary methodology developed by the WFTA,<sup>7</sup> provides a unique way to categorise gastronomy tourists and foodies in general. In total, 13 different types of tourists are proposed, including the adventurer, the ambience, the authentic, the budget, the eclectic, the gourmet, the innovative, the localist, the novice, the organic, the social, the trendy and the vegetarian. While only 8.1% of foodies initially chose the gourmet category, other choices were much higher, such as authentic (8.8%) and local (11.0%). Even the novice occupied a higher position (10.7%). The research revealed another unique phenomenon: cities have their own Psycho-Culinary Profiles. For example, respondents in New York City ranked gourmet, trendy and social in top-3 positions, whereas respondents in Toronto ranked localist, eclectic, and organic in top-3 positions. In other words, specific cities are attracted to a particular kind of foodie rather than just foodies in general. The important thing here is that there really needs to be knowledge of both the destination and the visitors in order to create the right message for the right type of visitors or customers ([Wolf, 2015](#)).

### Intergenerational gastronomy

The biggest trend in gastronomic travel today is the growing variety of tourist profiles and how travel agencies adapt to this growing segmentation. A man from the Baby Boomers generation looking for truffles in Provence has a different profile to a Millennial woman navigating the Denver Beer Trails, or a Generation-X family with two kids exploring food stalls in Singapore. However, they all share the same passion for local restaurant experiences and are willing to spend extra money on travel agencies that fit their personal preferences. So, tour operators today are trying to identify and define emerging food tourists and their individual preferences. The rise of ‘Meal Sharing’, which is based on online platforms that match food tourists with local chefs, homeowners and tour operators, in the same model as platforms like Airbnb do it for accommodation, is rather significant. People can record gastronomic experiences ranging from 2 h to two days, from home-made meals to cheese-making lessons on a farm or sustainability trips to a cattle farm. There is also a growing request for cooking storytelling, with content produced by publishers, agents and by teams of experts worldwide. Super local food is the biggest trend in culinary tourism, based on two different factors, the success of local restaurants and the success of the Airbnb platform ([Greg Oates, 2016](#)).

### Food sharing

A new trend strongly active in recent years is that of food sharing. This section lists some of the platforms that support this activity, which is basically an adaptation to the Airbnb paradigm in dining. *La Belle Assiette* (<https://labelleassiette.co.uk>) was founded to make entertaining at home enjoyable by envisioning to bring talented chefs into everyone’s kitchen so they can enjoy hosting dinners, without the stress of

<sup>7</sup> As presented at <https://www.worldfoodtravel.org/cpages/psychoculinary-profiling>.

cooking or cleaning. In *Share homemade meals for \$ 8* (<https://shmeal.co>), cooks post a meal they're going to be cooking and interested eaters submit requests and pick up from the cook's place. *OLIO - The Food Sharing Revolution* (<https://olioex.com>), connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared and not thrown away. *Share Meals* (<https://sharemeals.org>) is dedicated to ensuring all college students are food secure, through sharing food. In this platform students can share extra meal swipes and post extra food from club events with students who are food insecure. *ShareTheMeal* (<https://sharethemeal.org/en/index.html>) is an initiative of the United Nations World Food Programme with which with the use of the service anyone can "share the meal" with a child in need, costing only US \$ 0.50 to feed one child for a day. *ChefsFeed* (<https://www.chefsfeed.com>) offers connection to authentic food and dining experiences, by providing experiences, guides and points of reference. *Eatwith* (<https://www.eatwith.com>) envisions to create a community for authentic culinary experiences with locals that is already available in over 130 countries.

### Meal planning

Another new trend in recent years is that of meal planning through the internet and smart mobile applications. This section lists some of the platforms that support this activity. *Mealime - Mealime Planning App for Healthy Eating* (<https://www.mealime.com>) supports the whole food preparation cycle, from planning, to shopping to cooking. The Automatic Meal Planner - *Eat This Much* (<https://www.eatthismuch.com>) creates personalized meal plans based on food preferences, budget and schedule and aids in reaching diet and nutritional goals with calorie calculation, weekly meal plans, grocery lists and more. *Paprika Recipe Manager* for iOS, Mac, Android, and Windows (<http://paprikaapp.com>) helps organize recipes, make meal plans, and create grocery lists, while providing support for saving recipes seen on the web. *Meal Planner and Grocery Shopping List Maker - Plan to Eat* (<https://www.plantoate.com>) helps busy households get healthy dinners on the table by aiding in collecting and organizing recipes, adding those recipes to meal planning calendars and provide organized grocery lists. *Pepperplate* (<http://www.pepperplate.com>) is another recipe management, menu creation, meal planning and shopping tool. *Cook Smarts: Kitchen inspiration and weekly meal plan service* (<https://www.cooksmarts.com>) is an integrated all-in-one service that supports a recipes archive, menu proposals, diet options, customised service sizes, grocery lists, accompanied with educational material and nutrition information, delivery integration and more. *Prepear: The Complete System for Meal Planning and Recipe Management* (<https://prepear.com>) is another service for recipe organisation and management, meal planning, cooking companion, focusing on healthy nutrition.

### Conclusion

Gastronomy is steadily becoming an important factor in destination branding and identity. It provides the 'divergence' factor that is so significant for the people who travel in seek of genuine new experiences. The gastronomic tourism has already been recognized as a sector on its own, and travel agencies, tourism operators and regional economies integrate it to their portfolio. In this extensive review an attempt was made to summarise the current situation in the gastronomic tourism globally, with a bit of focus in Greece. The review was an essential part of a study on the subject within a Greek national research and innovation project that aimed at the promotion of gastronomic tourism of particular regions of North Greece. The review begins by trying to clarify the terminology and how the term evolved in time along with some important historical milestones. It highlights the numerous studies that have been published by individual researchers and relevant global organizations, like the WFTA and UNWTO, and lists the most important results in their studies. It particularly focuses on the

situation in Greece and highlights the strategies adopted, the media and channels preferred, and the 'divergence' offered by different regions within the country. The review concludes with current trends that focus mainly on online actions, dissemination and participation, particularly within the trend of 'crowd economy'.

Regarding these new trends, Greece is still a bit "behind", as the anthropocentric culture of the Greeks still poses as the genuine factor in the tourism interactions offered. Nevertheless, as Airbnb-type services become pervasive, so those alike services in gastronomy are expected to grow in global scale, both in personal/family settings, in group settings, or in any type of gastronomic experience offered. Greece should make its plans for it in the future by taking advantage of the Mediterranean cuisine and diet that it represents.

The current situation after the COVID-19 pandemic that changed the everyday reality globally, the new trends discussed in this review may show another potential and unleash new dynamics in the domain, as the stable and mature technology that support these new solutions already offered to the people can be a driving force for further development in various levels. As we march towards the society of the 4th industrial revolution of the all-connected world, it all makes more sense for the bridging of gastronomy, technology and society.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this submission.

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